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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

FOR AF/S; INR

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [SF](#)

SUBJECT: MURDER OF FORMER IFP SUPPORTER THWARTS ANC HOPE FOR A LOCAL
VICTORY IN KZN

REF: A. A 09 Durban 50

[1](#)B. B 09 Durban 79

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[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY. Three Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) members have been arrested for the murder of a councilor who was expected to cast a deciding vote that would end the IFP's majority in the Amajuba District Municipality. This incident reveals the ongoing power struggle between the IFP and the African National Congress (ANC) and the former's sense of desperation as it continues to lose political ground in its remaining strongholds. END SUMMARY.

BACKGROUND

[1](#)2. (SBU) The Amajuba district municipality in northwestern KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) has been fiercely contested by the IFP and ANC for years. The IFP is popular in rural parts of the municipality, but the ANC enjoys greater support in urban areas. The IFP initially gained control of the municipality when the first transitional local government authority was established in [1](#)1994. By the time of the 2006 local government elections, however, the IFP had lost significant political ground and lost control of the Amajuba District Municipality to the ANC (Ref A). The margin of victory was so thin, however, that the ANC needed the support of the National Democratic Convention (NADECO, a splinter group from the IFP) to install its mayor and executive committee.

[1](#)3. (SBU) In early 2008, however, then leader of NADECO Ziba Jiyane (a former National Chairperson of the IFP) fell out of favor with ANC provincial leaders and convinced his party to switch back its support to the IFP. Working with representatives from the Democratic Alliance (DA), the IFP ousted then ANC Amajuba Mayor Vincent Mabuyakhulu and replaced him with IFP Mayor Mkhulu Mlangeni by a margin of 13 to 12 votes.

[1](#)4. (SBU) The IFP's municipal control was threatened in mid 2008 when NADECO split and formed the Federal Congress (FEDCON) and South African Democratic Congress (SADECO). FEDCON sided with the IFP while SADECO aligned itself with the ANC. With FEDCON's support, however, the IFP managed to hang on to control of the municipality.

BACK TO THE ANC

¶15. (SBU) In November 2009, the ANC defeated the IFP in the November 2009 Amajuba bi-elections. Knowing that the ANC would immediately oust the IFP's mayor, Amajuba District Municipal Speaker Peter Croft and IFP-aligned council member refused to convene any further municipal meetings. The ANC went to court and forced the speaker to schedule a meeting for January 16.

CRITICAL VOTE THWARTED

¶16. (SBU) On January 14, Newcastle Municipal Councilor Thenjiwe Buthelezi and FEDCON member was murdered in her home; she was expected to vote against the IFP and in support of the ANC's vote of no confidence of Mayor Mlangeni. Buthelezi had historically supported the IFP but recently changed her allegiance, thereby threatening to end the IFP's control of the municipality, Regional ANC Chairperson Arthur Zwane told local media. FEDCON tried for months to fire Buthelezi and other FEDCON councilors who were suspected of planning to change their allegiances, according to Zwane.

¶17. (SBU) FEDCON Amajuba District Chairperson and Amajuba councilor Jerry Sibiya told Pol/Econ Assistant on February 16 that FEDCON 'has a standing decision to support the IFP' but councilor Buthelezi 'violated that decision' and the party was

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about to replace her in the municipality. Sibiya refused to speculate about the motive for Buthelezi's killing but said he believes it is linked to the on-going political tension in the area.

¶18. (SBU) Three IFP members, one of whom is an Amajuba councilor, have been arrested and charged with the murder of Buthelezi. Police Spokesperson Phindile Radebe told Pol/Econ Assistant on January 28 that the police believe the killing of Buthelezi was politically motivated and is linked to the ongoing IFP/ANC struggle for the control of the Amajuba municipality. On January 27, local IFP Amajuba District Organizer Jabu Mabaso told Pol/Econ Assistant that the IFP 'distances itself from the killing of Buthelezi' and denied that its members were involved.

Mabaso accused the police of being biased in their investigation and of being 'political instruments used by the ANC to topple the IFP in the municipality. When asked about the three arrested men, Mabaso and Sibiya confirmed separately to Pol/Econ assistant their IFP membership, but again denied that the men or the party had anything to do with Buthelezi's murder.

¶19. (SBU) Acting ANC Newcastle Mayor Afzul Rehman (who falls under the Amajuba District Municipality) on January 28 told Pol/Econ Assistant that he believes Buthelezi was killed because she planned to vote with the ANC. 'There is a battle for power in Amajuba and people will do anything to gain it,' Rehman said.

In a January 24 statement, MEC (Member of Executive Committee, like a 'provincial minister') for Transport, Community Safety and Liaison Willies Mchunu condemned the 'despicable' murder of Buthelezi. Mchunu formed a provincial political violence task team to investigate Buthelezi's murder and deployed members of a public order policing unit to monitor the political situation in

the Amajuba District Municipality.

TEMPORARY CONTROL

¶10. (SBU) On January 29, Buthelezi's vacant council seat was filled by IFP-friendly FEDCON member Joseph Zulu. The ANC's no confidence vote of Mayor Mlangeni was subsequently defeated, but the ANC was able to oust the council's speaker, an IFP-aligned member of the DA. The ANC is expected to continue its efforts to take over the municipality.

COMMENT

¶11. (SBU) Unable to defeat the ANC at the provincial level, desperate IFP members seem resolved to hold off the ANC in the party's remaining strongholds by any means necessary (Ref B). That resolve, however, has not carried over into service delivery - the true reason the IFP continues to lose power. A sense of political entitlement has gripped the minds of many local IFP leaders, who have lost sight of the fact that voters want their elected officials to improve their lives, not to waste time on political posturing.

DERDERIAN